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ALTHEA R. SHERMAN, 1928

## IOWA'S WOMAN ORNITHOLOGIST

### ALTHEA ROSINA SHERMAN

#### 1853-1943

By MRS. H. J. TAYLOR<sup>1</sup>

Althea Rosina Sherman was born in Farmersburg Township, Clayton County, Iowa, October 10, 1853. Her parents, Mark Bachelor Sherman and Melissa Clark Sherman, were born of "pioneer stock that for two hundred years had been leaders in the march westward." (*History of Clayton County, Iowa*, Vol. 2, 1916, p. 380). From New York state they came to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, in 1843. They moved to Iowa in 1845, and located in Clayton County, about fifty miles from Dubuque, where they built their pioneer home. All about was trackless prairie resounding with howling winds and the wild cry of the prairie wolf. Their first caller was a Winnebago Indian chief asking for food. A memorable incident was a rattlesnake that fell to the floor as the mother lifted the teakettle to the stove.

The Sherman home was the first frame house on the Iowa prairie north of Dubuque and served as a landmark and an unofficial "Wayside Inn" to the endless covered wagon procession trailing westward to establish homes on cheap land.<sup>2</sup>

Of this home Miss Sherman wrote: "The first homes were log cabins sheltered by the woods, their owners believing it foolhardy to build upon the prairies, where buildings would be wrecked by the winds. Thus they cautioned my father when he chose a location away from the woods. But he built his house just the same and dared to use lumber instead of logs, and even to make it one and a half stories high. Oak beams were used to strengthen the wall; between beam and siding a wall of heavy oak planks was erected perpendicularly. Built this way it was believed that if the house should be carried away by the wind it would hold together.

"It was not intended as a tavern yet in the wilderness one can't turn away the cold and hungry from the door, so the little house was sometimes crowded to its utmost capacity. One night fourteen travelers slept on the kitchen floor."

In the pioneer home one son and four daughters, the youngest of whom died in childhood, were born. The daughter born in Prairie du Chien died in early womanhood.

After twenty years in the pioneer home the Shermans bought land two miles farther north where they built their permanent home. Here a post office was located and the name National (pronounced Nā'-tion-al) was given to the village which had little beyond a blacksmith shop, a

<sup>1</sup>The writer is indebted to Dr. and Mrs. T. C. Stephens, appreciative friends of Miss Sherman, for valuable suggestions and data, and to Dr. Stephens for reading the manuscript.

<sup>2</sup>After the Mexican War public land could be bought at \$1.25 an acre and often for less if an ex-soldier wished to sell his warrant. Mark Sherman bought such a warrant and obtained land at 79 cents an acre.

general store for trading, a church or two, and a post office. It attained a population of about 200 people.<sup>3</sup>

National is twelve miles from McGregor, Iowa. The pioneers who located about this little post office town were largely an educated and cultured class, and from its earliest years National had an atmosphere of intellectual refinement. The colonial house built here in 1866 by Mark and Melissa Sherman has been continuously the Sherman home. It is on Highway 52 which follows the Dubuque-St. Paul trail of early days. About two miles east on the same highway stands the pioneer house built in 1845. It is today used as a machine-shop and from outward appearances is good for another century.

Miss Sherman traced her ancestry to England where the name is found as early as 1420.<sup>4</sup> The Sherman family of Suffolk, England, was a prominent one. To this the American branch traces its ancestry. Miss Sherman said: "My known ancestry entitles me to membership in the following societies: Mayflower Descendants (through William Bradford); Colonial Dames; and Daughters of the American Revolution."

When scarcely in her teens she attended Upper Iowa University at Fayette. Later she went to Oberlin College, and graduated in 1875 with an A.B. degree. In 1882 she received the Master's degree from the same college. She was a loyal alumna proud of her alma mater that has much cause to be proud of her. Her class tie was strong and she followed the development of her classmates with deep interest. The children born to them were in a sense her nieces and nephews. She often expressed the hope that she might attend her fiftieth class reunion. This hope she realized in June, 1925, and it was a great satisfaction to her. She wrote: "We had a cheerful time. Now I have only two hopes and ambitions: one to go to Oberlin's Centennial celebration; the other to go to A. O. U.'s next meeting in Philadelphia." To her no place was quite so alluring as the Quaker City.

On graduating from Oberlin, Miss Sherman taught four years in the public schools. When, in 1922, she spoke before the Sioux City Academy of Sciences a friend said: "Why, I know her! Miss Sherman was my teacher in a little country school more than forty years ago. There was never another teacher like her. She took us into the woods a few rods away, showed us how flowers grow; how seeds ripen; how leaves are constructed and how they breathe; how to know trees by the bark. I can never forget her. She has been an asset in my life."

After a few years of teaching there followed study at the Art Institute in Chicago and the Art Students' League in New York City.

<sup>3</sup>There was no money. Everything was trade. Miss Sherman recalled taking a wash tub full of eggs and getting one pound of tea for them. Eggs were three cents a dozen and tea was one dollar a pound.

<sup>4</sup>Miss Sherman said that her father, Mark Bachelor Sherman, brought with him to Iowa a manuscript history of his father's family. One of these ancestors was Roger Conant, founder of Salem, Massachusetts, who was also an ancestor of James Conant, president of Harvard. Another ancestor was Captain Aaron Kimball, one of the "Minute Men" of Lexington in Revolutionary days. Roger Sherman, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was also an ancestor of Mark Bachelor Sherman.



## ALTHEA SHERMAN: TWO PERIODS OF HER LIFE

The left picture is enlarged from a family group photograph, taken when she was seven and one-half years old (in 1861). The photograph on the right was taken while a student at Oberlin College, perhaps in 1875, the year she graduated.

From 1882 to 1887 she was instructor in drawing in Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, a Congregational school founded in 1866. From 1892-1895 she was supervisor of drawing in the city schools of Tacoma, Washington. Drawing, painting—expression through art—here was a glorious field, alluring and full of interest, one that opened still wider the avenues of natural sciences. Botany, mammalogy, ornithology were growing interests to Miss Sherman and she expressed them with pencil, brush, and pen. Art was the natural outlet of her life and her work in these early years gave promise of rare attainment. Was an artist lost when suddenly she was called from this field? Recently she referred to this period of her life, recalling her deep interest in art and her expectation to make it her life work: "But changes come suddenly and unexpectedly. My parents needed my care and I went to them in the old home in 1895 and have been here ever since. My father died in 1896, my mother in 1902."

Miss Sherman's interests were wide, varied, opening into many fields. There is reality in all she did. Her work in drawing and painting, in spite of early interruption, has lasting quality and definite value. At the American Ornithologists' Union convention in Chicago in 1922, she exhibited three paintings. Looking at her "Brown Thrasher", Louis Agassiz Fuertes remarked to the writer: "That Brown Thrasher has more life and personality than any bird I ever painted." Articles from her

pen to various branches of science were distinct contributions. Her article on Bats (*Journal of Mammalogy*, Vol. 10, 1929, pp. 319-326) was the result of fourteen years of study. On seeing the article a prominent mammalogist wrote: "She has put on record many facts new to all of us and thrown more light on the habits of these remarkable animals than anyone else in recent times."

Circumstances in her life brought out qualities of rare and universal value. Miss Sherman was never overcome. She looked squarely and thoughtfully at events that were baffling and seemingly insurmountable, evaluated them and made them stepping stones in her life. There was no waste in her life. Hers was not a buoyant personality radiating sunshine and joyousness. It was a rugged personality stamped with reality, strength, vision; ready ever to face and endure the weather of human experience. She radiated mental and spiritual health, power, understanding. Life brings many interruptions, sudden and compelling, that force us from our wonted paths. Many are bewildered; some are stranded; not so Miss Sherman. The home cares and responsibilities that became hers would have absorbed most women. Absorption has a drying-up effect while diversion refreshes and recreates. A living soul is ever opening new avenues; it loses no time in regrets and laments.

Elm, maple, and cedar trees framed in the comfortable colonial house with its acre or two of yard planted to orchard, shrubs, and garden; the big red barn stood a few rods distant. These with the adjoining pasture and swamp became her laboratory. Here she worked intensely and steadily for nearly half a century, preeminently in ornithology though no plant or animal escaped her notice.



THE SHERMAN HOME AT NATIONAL, IOWA

The sturdy pioneer house was built in 1866. This view is of the front side which faces east. From a photograph taken by Dr. T. C. Stephens in August, 1923.



#### THE CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER

This structure, probably the only one of its kind in existence, was built in 1915. Its sole purpose was to attract the Chimney Swift so that a systematic study of its nesting habits could be made. From the ground to the top of the chimney it measures almost thirty feet high, and is nine feet square. The simulate chimney, built of boards, is two feet square and runs down the center of the building to a depth of fourteen feet. Peep-holes at several places in the chimney gave Miss Sherman an opportunity to watch at close range the nesting activities of the swifts. The circular staircase inside the building is suggested by the windows at different levels. The tower illustrates the seriousness with which Miss Sherman regarded her bird study work. The west side of the Sherman home is in the background.

The old red barn, in which no horse neighed or crunched its oats for many years, was one of the most interesting spots in Miss Sherman's laboratory. She called it the "Flicker Apartment House". Her study, 'At the Sign of the Northern Flicker' (*Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 22, pp. 135-171), through a period of fifteen years is not only a contribution to ornithology but is also an insight into her untiring and painstaking method of work. The three original drawings in this article, full of action and expression, are characteristic of the author's art.

In 1915 she built a tower thirty feet high, a few rods from the house, to attract the Chimney Swift. It was three years before a swift came. From then on it fulfilled its purpose for the swifts and became a rare opportunity for the study of these birds. To go up the winding stairs to the chimney and sit within a few inches of the birds, yet not be seen by them as they build their nests, lay their eggs, rear their young, and come home to roost is a rare privilege that I have enjoyed. Bird students from far and near have visited the tower. In a letter of October, 1931, Miss Sherman wrote: "In one week in July I took fifty-six people up into the chimney of the tower to see the Chimney Swifts". In 1928 the swifts abandoned their three previous nests and built and used a fourth nest below and in line with three previously built nests.

The great bed of tiger-lilies with its abundant and colorful blossoms and a bed of phlox was the field for the Ruby-throated Hummingbird study through seven summers. Her 'Experiments in Feeding Hummingbirds During Seven Summers' (*Wilson Bulletin*, December, 1913, pp. 153-166) was read at the Thirty-first Annual Congress of American Ornithologists' Union, in New York City in 1913, and was received with much interest. This paper was printed in the *Annual Report* of the Smithsonian Institution. By permission it was also printed in the *Avicultural Magazine* (England) in September and October, 1915.

Miss Sherman's work bears the stamp of thorough and first-hand study through a period of years. You may differ from her — though never dogmatically — if you, too, are a thorough student in this field. In considering her results and statements you reconsider your own.

In a letter, 1926, Miss Sherman stated: "I count twenty years all too short for a thorough acquaintance with the birds of my own dooryard, where thirty-one species have been pleased to nest". In May, 1936, she wrote: "On my home surroundings I have listed 168 species. Forty species have nested on our place in the past thirty-three years. Of the forty species that have nested on our place in the past thirty-three years I have obtained very full details of the nesting of some of them and not so full of others. They are: Sora, Killdeer, Bob-white, Mourning Dove, Sparrow Hawk, Screech Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Chimney Swift, Kingbird, Phoebe, Bluebird, Bobolink, Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Baltimore Oriole, Bronzed Grackle, Black-billed Cuckoo, Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dickcissel, Barn Swallow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Warbling Vireo, Indigo Bunting, Migrant Shrike, Northern Yellow-throat,

Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Western House Wren, Short-billed Marsh Wren, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Alder Flycatcher, Robin.

"A few have been studied longer and more thoroughly than by any other person so far as I can learn. Those thus studied are the Screech Owl for twenty-six years, the Flicker for thirty-three years, Chimney Swift for seventeen years, Phoebe for thirty-one years, Red-winged Blackbird for twenty-nine years, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Robin for thirty-three years, Alder Flycatcher for fifteen years.

"For several years I have been killing all the Screech Owls that could be found in this neighborhood. I pay fifty cents apiece for them. I am astonished that ornithologists have not awakened to the deadly menace these owls are to the harmless birds. For twenty-six years I have watched these owls and I know of what I speak.

"Another bird upon which I have made war is the Bronzed Grackle which was scarcely to be found here in 1902. In 1934 I paid upward of \$12 for dead grackles at fifteen cents each".

Miss Sherman's campaign against the House Wren is well known. The serious, scientific ornithologist reckons with her findings; on others they have little effect. She said: "I am up against it in the whole fight, the stubbornness of the 'little knowledge'—always a dangerous thing—and the impossibility of wiseacres comprehending what real investigation means. I have said my say in print and hope I shall be left free to write on my other birds."

In *Iowa Bird Life* (Vol. I, pp. 5 and 9) Miss Sherman says: "All can share in this study [birds] as long as we keep our birds, but that will not be long unless everyone awakens to the exterminating threats that reside in Screech Owls, Ring-necked Pheasants, Bronzed Grackles, English Sparrows, and House Wrens. . . . When the ground thaws out I have for burial eight Screech Owls 'collected' within a period of about twenty days of the year. They will not be 'laid away tenderly and reverently' as the sickening sentimentalist describes his interment of a Screech Owl".

Miss Sherman's work was unquestionably thorough and her sharp-pointed pen put her writing in a class by itself. You were struck by her rare English; her descriptions are lasting pictures. In her valuable paper, 'Nest Life of the Screech Owl' (*Auk*, 1911, Vol. 28, pp. 155-168) she says: "The blind, intended as a shelter while watching migrating birds, was built upon posts on a tiny plot of nearly solid earth in a small quagmire. . . . In its outside dimensions the blind is but forty-five inches square, hence when four of us entered it, the audience in the ceremony of viewing the Owls, like that of the Greek Orthodox Church, remained standing." In another letter she said that she condemned herself severely for ever letting a Screech Owl escape alive, and remarked: "There is too much slush connected with present-day conservation".

Miss Sherman made an extensive tour of the Old World, leaving New York on November 7, 1913. Ten months later, on account of the war, she was obliged to return. She had traveled 33,000 miles and had visited twenty countries. Her ornithological observations and comments are embodied in 'Birds by the Wayside' as follows:

In Europe, Asia, and Africa. (*Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 27, 1915, pp. 243-271)

In Egypt and Nubia. (*Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 27, 1915, pp. 369-393)

In Palestine. (*Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 28, 1916, pp. 106-122)

In Greece. (*Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 28, 1916, pp. 157-171)

Her capacity for seeing and understanding added to her sharp pen and expressive English make these notes interesting and valuable. Her original and poignant descriptions flavor her writing deliciously. In Birds in Egypt and Nubia she wrote: "A view was obtained of a small Owl. . . . It retired to a small niche prepared for it by the wise precaution of Rameses III. That monarch realizing how easily many of his forefathers had stolen the monuments of their predecessors resolved to fore-stall this thieving propensity in his descendants by making the job too hard for them in his temple at Medinet-Abu. This was done by cutting the hieroglyphics very deep. The depth of some will admit the hand quite to the wrist, a measurement of fully seven inches."

On page 387 of the above article she wrote: "Since the crocodile still survives in the upper reaches of the Nile there is offered brilliant opportunities for the ambitious young man with the camera, who shall secure for us moving pictures of the plovers at work cleaning the saurian's teeth. This is especially desirable because of the skepticism still prevailing in spite of John Lea's array of evidences."



A STUDIO PORTAIT MADE IN 1916

In *Birds by the Wayside in Palestine*, page 109, Miss Sherman wrote: "We . . . passed within sight of a structure said to mark the birth-place of Samson. . . . Whatever shortcomings this ancient athlete displayed in his escapades before his hair-cut, he evinced good judgment in two respects: He chose for Ramath-lehi a site that would be in full view of future railway trains, and in slaying there a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass he did not muss up a spot that was of any value for agricultural purposes."

Her trip to the Old World was Miss Sherman's only long absence from her bird laboratory at National, Iowa. Here she worked as regularly as a business man goes to his office, but her hours were not fixed and vacations were not on the schedule. Her work was independent and thorough in a laboratory that had no duplicate. Her alluring and original style made her work interesting beyond the circle of the strictly scientific. She was the busiest woman I ever knew and she accomplished the most. Her method of work, her ever-widening interests, her eagerness to give to the world the results of her studies, kept her life full and made her interesting and inspiring to others.

A visit to her home was an event. She was a hostess unlike any other. There was no waste in her plans. The well-laden table was a banquet prepared by her. When and how was not evident. It was a New England table fragrant with delicious pot-roast and gravy; fresh vegetables direct from her garden; steaming, mealy potatoes untouched and unspoiled by any potato-masher; hot biscuits; graham and salt-rising breads. She remarked: "I made the salt-rising bread thinking it might recall years long gone. We still like it." The lemon pie with its quivering custard, and the mince pie that must have been a New England brand all its own, were unsurpassed. The spice and pound cakes recalled feast days in the pioneer life of my parents. Her table conversation led into various fields of science. With clear and concise evaluation she brought in review men of promise and men of rare attainment. Her criticism of work wanting in sincerity and truth was keen, direct and scathing.

Dinner over, the tower was suggested as an interesting place to watch the nesting swifts as well as those returning to their nightly roost. The chimney became black with twenty or more birds clinging to its walls. The evening was full of interesting comment in various fields of science. Her drawings and paintings, numbering over 250, brought in review bird and animal painters. Time flew. "It's half past one," said Miss Sherman, "but we must visit the bats sitting in the window blinds upstairs and then it will be bedtime." We saw the bats, some of which she knew as individuals. When, a few years later, her article on bats was published, it had for me a deep, personal interest recalling a very rare day in my life.

The rosy tints of the new day had scarcely touched the leaden bars of clouds when we started on our rounds of the laboratory. In the old, red barn a Yellow-shafted Flicker was raising the annual brood as had been done for nearly forty years. The barn was indeed the "Flicker

Apartment House". Our observations were made from the hayloft through peep-holes. A hayloft in a midwest summer is a hot and almost unendurable place when watching a family of Flickers four or five hours daily through several weeks. Miss Sherman remarked that the Starlings, since their arrival in 1933, had constantly interfered with the Flickers. A pair of Phoebes claimed one rafter in the barn where, except for two years, they nested and raised their young for thirty-five years. The laboratory was a place for constant, strenuous, daily work through all kinds of weather. Every shrub, tree, and locality had its special interest.

A yellow rose bush on one side of the gate, a blush rose on the other was an inviting entrance to the Sherman house and its ample yard. White with green blinds, it stands as it was built in 1866. The house has eight or nine large rooms exclusive of the woodshed and the summer kitchen—essential adjuncts of every pioneer house. It was a luxurious



IN THE SHERMAN HOME—THE TYPICAL PARLOR OF BYGONE YEARS

This scene is no doubt cherished by all visitors to Miss Sherman's home. Everything in the room was left just as it was furnished shortly after the Civil War; the original wallpaper is still intact and in good condition, and the positions of pictures and articles of furniture probably have not been changed in sixty years. Prominent are the black, horse-hair upholstered sofa and chairs, what-not in the corner, family portrait albums and stereoscope on the center-table with its oval marble top, generous display of pictures on the walls, and fancy, highly-colored carpet. A large bookcase stood on the right side just out of the picture. The west window looks out upon the Chimney Swift tower.

home in its day. I marveled at the many cords of cut-up wood in the shed and the many more uncut outside. It seemed enough for years.

The house was interesting. The gilt-figured paper in the parlor was as spotless as when it was put on more than seventy years ago. The "What-Not" standing in the northwest corner continued to fulfill its purpose. Among the many things it held were two hand-carved dolls, mother and baby, with jointed knees and elbows. Not a hair was left on their heads and all trace of painted facial features had been worn off for many years. These dolls were given to Sibyl Melissa Clark Sherman when she was seven or eight years old by her uncle, Aaron Clark, mayor of New York City about 1830. The walls of both parlor and library were hung with pencil drawings and paintings done by Miss Sherman. All her pictures, drawings, and paintings, numbering about 250, she presented to the Iowa Historical Museum at Des Moines, Iowa.

The weekly and monthly magazines that came at her subscription are too numerous to mention. She was a member of fifteen scientific societies.<sup>5</sup> She never took a daily paper, and explained: "If there is anything worth knowing I will get it in the weeklies, and I have plenty of kindling to start the fire. We have far, far too much to read and too much time goes to reading." Miss Sherman is not only in '*Who's Who*' but also in '*American Men of Science*', where very few women have been enrolled. She joined the American Ornithologists' Union in 1907. She was elected a "Member" in 1912. Only three women up to that time had been raised to this class which is limited to one hundred persons.

Miss Sherman had an unfailing interest in the life of the little community about her. When the church was without a pastor she continued the service by reading one of Spurgeon's sermons each Sunday morning. When a girl of sixteen, and two boys in the community, each a year older, won the national prize in judging cattle, she was filled with pride and enthusiasm. She wrote: "Go to the country for common sense. I started the idea of a rousing reception to the winners. It is said 600 people were there. Refreshments were served and there was enough. Speeches followed. We were proud of our young folks and they knew it." In September, 1933, she wrote: "National is the site of the Clayton County Fair. All the stir of the year centers in the few days of that time." Her interest in this annual event was keen and her generosity, to make it a success, was boundless.

Little children were drawn to Miss Sherman. They came to see her birds and brought her offerings of flowers. They received a genuine welcome and she was never too busy to point out to them her birds and their nests in the shrubbery.

<sup>5</sup>These were: American Association for the Advancement of Science; American Ornithologists' Union; National Audubon Society; Ecology Society; Cooper Ornithological Club; Iowa Ornithologists' Union (of which she was a Charter Member); Wilson Ornithological Club; American Museum of Natural History; American Society of Mammalogists; American Genetic Association; American Biological Society; Iowa Academy of Science; Iowa State Historical Society; Mississippi Valley Historical Association; Ottawa Field Naturalist Club.



"Little children were drawn to Miss Sherman. They came to see her birds and brought her offerings of flowers. They received a genuine welcome and she was never too busy to point out to them her birds and their nests in the shrubbery."

(Photograph taken at the door of the Chimney Swift tower, 1928.)

To the early pioneers the village of National was an attractive center and meeting place. Losing the post office was a hard blow. Miss Sherman's persistence kept National somewhat on the map. She was a pioneer and knew what it had meant and that it should not entirely vanish. Mark Sherman was a leader in the group that built the Congregational church nearly seventy years ago, and its followers were justly proud of it. The main floor had a seating capacity of about 200. The balcony seated about fifty. The pipe-organ in the northeast end of the main floor is still in use. The pulpit, elevated about ten feet above the floor, is in the southeast corner. It is enclosed in an elaborate railing. Two stoves, located on either side of the west end of the room with stovepipes running to the chimney in the east end, heat the church fairly well. The years brought changes and National did not grow. The loss of the post office in 1902 took the name from the map.

National has been for many years only a memory. The church, once the pride of the village, has long fallen into disuse; only an occasional funeral has been held there. The Methodist church across the way is today a barn. In 1937 the Congregational church was put up for auction. Someone wanted it for a beer tavern. To save it from such a fate Miss Sherman put in the high bid and took the church for \$1050.00. She deeded the property to the Cemetery Association—thus this landmark is preserved. In the cemetery beside the church are the graves of Mark and Melissa Sherman and many other pioneers. A late interment was the burial of Dr. Amelia Sherman on November 6, 1940. On November 30, had she lived, she would have been ninety-one years old.

The deep feeling for National by the Sherman family is easily understood. For more than eighty years their home was in Clayton County, and for more than seventy years it was in National. After the death of the parents Miss Sherman and her sister, Dr. Amelia Sherman, four years her senior, were the sole occupants of the home. Miss Sherman was never reconciled to the loss of the post office. Only a few years ago she wrote: "National now is the name of a spot only, once there was a small village here." All her years, except twenty-six spent in study, teaching, and travel, were lived in Clayton County to which her name has added distinction. In the 1933 'Who's Who of the Women of the Nation' appear the names of Althea R. Sherman and her sister, Dr. Amelia Sherman. Clayton County and the State of Iowa may well be proud that in the list of names two are native daughters.

Miss Sherman's life was expressed in realities. Her observation of birds about her home for more than forty years was a study that has no duplicate. She did not belong to the group known as "Bird Lovers". For the sentimentalist who "loves the birdies no matter what they do" she had a wholesome contempt. She never sought the limelight nor was she guilty of writing what would be pleasing or acceptable. She was a student, scientist, and conservationist that appealed to the honest, thinking mind. She gave the truth uncamouflaged as she found it. Her letter to *The Condor* (May, 1925) suggesting a "Society to Protect Wild Life from the Protectionists", definite and direct, is good

reading and would enlarge the horizon of all save those "not subject to change."

Men distinguished in ornithology and other fields of natural science visited the acreage about the old colonial home on Highway 52 and marveled at her strenuous program. What she gave to the world was not what she thought but what she knew. Many and urgent requests begged that she lessen her daily routine of observation and give to the world from her own pen the valuable life histories of species—knowledge obtained through many years of serious study. It is regretted that this remained undone, but the work of a growing life is never finished. Miss Sherman's last paper, 'The Old Ornithology and the New', (Wilson



ALTHEA R. (LEFT) AND DR. AMELIA SHERMAN

From a photograph taken on the Sherman porch by Dr. T. C. Stephens in August, 1923.

The scene is very typical and shows the sisters as they are remembered by the hundreds of nature students who visited their home over a long period of years. Miss Althea holds a copy of *The Condor*, probably her favorite magazine. The Doctor holds a copy of the *Journal of the American Medical Society*, her favorite.

*Bulletin*, March, 1930, pp. 3-10) she read at the Annual Meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Club in Des Moines, 1929.

Here and there are individuals who live original lives. They are alone but not lonely. They follow no pattern of social life yet are a distinct factor in it. Their bent is their rudder, all else is secondary. Such an individual was Althea Rosina Sherman, rooted in National, nurtured in Iowa soil, the fruits of her years are universal. The essence of her life is cast abroad.

Althea R. Sherman died on April 16, 1943. The funeral service, conducted by the Rev. H. M. Adix, of Farmersburg, Iowa, was held in the parlor of the Sherman home. She was buried beside her sister, Amelia, in the cemetery at National.

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### EDITORIAL NOTE

*Althea Sherman was buried beside her relatives in the village cemetery at National, Iowa, on April 19, 1943. The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was represented at the last rites by these members: Arthur J. Palas, Charter Member and former President; Oscar P. Allert, former Treasurer; Fred J. Pierce, Charter Member and Editor of 'Iowa Bird Life'.*

*The Iowa Ornithologists' Union is very grateful to Mrs. Taylor for writing the very complete biography of Miss Sherman. Mrs. Taylor has made it a gratuitous contribution to the Union by underwriting the cost of publication. Her generosity is thus perpetuated in our special Sherman Memorial Issue and will stand as a lasting tribute to her friendship with Althea Sherman.*

*This special issue of 'Iowa Bird Life' takes the place of our regular June number, but another issue, containing the May bird census reports and other material scheduled for the June issue, will follow in a few weeks.*

*The Sherman Memorial Issue is published in an edition of 600 copies.*

—F. J. P.